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AUTHOR	Snapp, Mary
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ABSTRACT

Developed by educators from the Emily Griffith Opportunity School with input from employees--both workplace literacy students and nonstudents--this guide contains activities for teaching health and hygiene on the job. Flowing from a perspective of respecting cultural diversity and guided by a common thread of good work practices, the activities cover the following eight topics: the Martin Luther King story; asking personal questions; gestures; foods, odors, and stains; new information for a new job; personal hygiene objects and how they are used; medicine chest; and on-the-job communication. Lessons include activities and student handouts. (KC)

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HEALTH & HYGIENE IN THE WORKPLACE

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Mary Snapp

Emily Griffith Opportunity School
1250 Welton Street
Denver, Colorado 80204

July 15, 1994

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HEALTH & HYGIENE IN THE WORKPLACE

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Mary Snapp

July 15, 1994

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT

This module was developed by educators from Emily Griffith Opportunity School as part of a National Workplace Education grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A cooperative effort between the business and education communities, the program was designed specifically to enhance employees' literacy skills.

Direct benefits to the workforce include improved morale and motivation, self-esteem, team work, and promotional opportunities.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of our partners. In addition we recognize all of the students who participated in classes and who provided us with invaluable feedback for strengthening future classes.

We hope partnerships such as these will provide the catalyst for developing new or continued on-site educational opportunities.

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FOREWORD

Getting information to employees about personal hygiene was a concern of the manufacturing company where I teach ESL. A number of issues were involved: an avenue to disperse information, a concern for sensitivity, cultural differences, language barriers, amount of information, standards of acceptable hygiene at the Company, and differences in job operations and personal contact among employees.

The ESL class is an on-going class (approximately ten months a year) that meets two times a week for two hours; classes (first and second shift) meet for ten week sessions. Both Company administrative personnel and student/employees contribute to the curriculum content. *Health and Hygiene in the Workplace* was presented in the second session along with job-specific topics: job operations, work orders, and quality work policies. The classes are multi-cultural and multi-level; the average level is high-beginning to low-intermediate, according to student assessment.

I met with four supervisors and Human Resource personnel to find out personal hygiene concerns within the two departments that make up the ESL population of my class. Each person that was interviewed contributed common and different concerns. As a group of employees, we established the need for sensitivity and at the same time an understanding of expected personal hygiene standards at the workplace.

The most common concern was body odor, especially in warm-weather months. The next most common problem was bad breath. Other concerns were related in some way to sanitation, and how plumbing fixtures and health care products were used:

Spitting
Nose blowing
Hand washing
Use of toilet, sink, and drinking fountain
Storing lunches and cleaning up after lunch

The objective is to give ESL students/employees information about health and personal hygiene as it primarily relates to work, to discuss appropriate practices and acceptable standards at the workplace, and to give students the opportunity to ask questions and relate experiences from culturally diverse backgrounds. (Although exercise in general was a topic in this unit, ergonomics and stretching are discussed at other times.)

After the interviews, I spent time gathering information and resources related to health and hygiene, which became the name of our topic and related activities in class. There was a substantial amount of information from different points of view and presentation. I found everything from "good grooming tips" (we made up our own) to an activity exploring the contents of a bathroom medicine chest (we used mine).

The following list of resources was a tremendous help for background information and/or materials for classroom use:
(Classroom activities utilizing the following resources are specifically noted in the curriculum.)

The New Face of America, TIME Magazine Special Issue, Fall 1993.

The Working Culture, Book 1 Cross- Cultural Communications for New Americans, Prentice Hall Regents, 1989.

Speaking Up at Work, Oxford University Press, 1985.

"*I Have a Dream: The Story of Martin Luther King, Jr.*", Copycat Press, Inc. 1990.

BAR-S FOODS CO. Hourly Employee Handbook

I would also like to gratefully acknowledge four colleagues from Emily Griffith Opportunity School, who shared ideas for classroom activities:

Pam Ingram
Kathie Johnson
Kaye Lamb
Linda Nowicki

From the initial stages of planning the content and curriculum of *Health and Hygiene in the Workplace*, I wanted to use a format for sharing information based on cultural diversity. While it was important to me that our ESL classroom remain a "safe" and comfortable place to raise questions, discuss sensitive information, express opinions and comparisons, I also felt it was important that information and material be presented as "differences/ similarities". I encouraged and modeled language like "acceptable/ unacceptable", "appropriate/not appropriate", "different/same", and "OK/not OK", avoiding "good" and "bad" as much as possible.

One of the dilemmas I found was the large amount of information that needed to be presented in a limited amount of time. One idea would lead to another and one activity would lead to another, but time was limited. Another dilemma was that as well as I thought I had prepared materials to be "culturally sensitive", there always was a viewpoint or perception I hadn't thought of. The third dilemma was in the initial presentation of hygiene material. How could I go from job work orders and Company policies one week to personal hygiene the next? I could visualize some great class discussions, small group problem-solving, and interesting interactive activities, but how to bridge the gap without walking in to the ESL class one day and announcing, "OK now, about personal hygiene at work..."

From working with a company policy that listed quality work and acceptable work practices, we began a ten week curriculum to talk about cultural diversity that would ultimately focus on health and personal hygiene. I had taken the opportunity of a recent holiday commemorating America's most famous civil rights leader to discuss his contributions to the United

States and some of the changes that had resulted. We discussed cultural differences and similarities in the U.S. and the students' native countries. The students asked questions about meaning and acceptable standards of American customs, and recounted customs from their countries along with their experiences in the U.S. This laid the foundation for cultural diversity as a theme and in particular a focus on *Health and Hygiene in the Workplace*.

Activities included practice with critical thinking skills, problem-solving, storytelling, hands-on activities, dialogue/role playing, and drawing. To bridge the gap from our previous job-specific topics to our present topic, I constructed a story about a new employee at a food processing site who is given an employee handbook to read. The story, "A New Job--New Information" gave me a format to reinforce learning from prior topics, to introduce new vocabulary, to discuss sensitive information using a fictional character and company, and to discuss health and hygiene needs/practices at our own work site.

The following list of topics is presented in order of activity and discussed in more detail below:

A. The Martin Luther King Story
B. Asking Questions, Too Personal or OK?
C. Gestures
D. Foods, Odors, and Stains
E. "A New Job--New Information"
F. Realia: What's this? What's it for?
G. Medicine Chest
H. On-the-Job-Communication

TOPIC A: THE MARTIN LUTHER KING STORY

ACTIVITIES:

1. On Dr. King's birthday I gave the students an eight page story written in basic English with pictures depicting each paragraph. (Copycat Press, Inc. 1990. See *Resources*.) I recorded the text on a cassette tape for students to take home for reading and pronunciation help.

2. We discussed vocabulary and ideas in the story, especially as they related to present time. Students asked questions about customs, accepted practices, and shared differences in their countries. The differences between customs in Dr. King's lifetime, as related in the story, and today gave the students an opportunity to discuss and express opinions and experiences about cultural differences.

TOPIC B: ASKING QUESTIONS, TOO PERSONAL or OK?

ACTIVITIES:

1. Conversation Cards: Using 3 x 5 index cards, students write five questions of their choice, no answers, related to work and job operations (studied prior to Health and Hygiene). Students work in pairs asking and answering each other's questions. Examples:

   * Where do you work?
   * Which shift do you work?
   * How long have you been at ABC Company?
   * What do you do? or, What's your job?

   To reinforce verbs and syntax:

   * Do you tape seam?
   * Can you close back? (a skill or job operation different from above)
   * Do you like to stretch?

2. To reinforce verb tenses, vocabulary, structure, etc., give students strips of paper, each strip with a question or an answer. Students work in pairs to match questions and answers, then asking and answering the questions.

3. Asking personal questions (Working Culture, Book 1. See *Resources.*) is an activity that is preceded by nonpersonal questions (the activities above) and introduced as personal information that people may or may not be comfortable in discussing, according to

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one's experience and customs. Students are given a handout with various topics and asked to identify which are too personal or OK according to what the student thinks is acceptable for the U.S. and his/her native country. We listed the countries represented by the students and the U.S. on the board, and discussed and compared the results. For example, it was discussed within the class that it is too personal to ask in only a couple of the countries, how much someone pays for a new car but for most of the students it is OK, including China where it is OK to ask the cost of a new bicycle!

This is a very interesting and fun exercise. It gives the students a format to discuss a variety of issues without singling out students and their cultures. We practiced English, showed surprise, laughed, expressed empathy, and found new information about each others' culture.

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TOPIC C: GESTURES

ACTIVITIES:

1. Pre-teach "say" ("How do you say 'No way!' in your country?"), "tell" ("Tell me to 'Go away'."), "show" ("Show her 'embarrassed'."), and "gesture" ("What's the gesture for 'Stop.' in your country?") I write the word on the board and ask students what it means; and give an example, as above. I ask for students' examples.

2. Using drawings of gestures (The Working Culture, Book 1. See Resources.) we interpret possible meanings according to cultural backgrounds.

    * How do you show OK in your native country?
    * In the U.S./your native country, what's the gesture for OK?
    * How do you show "I don't understand." in your native country?
    * Did you or other people use this in your native country? Is this OK? (use a picture or refer to a previous gesture to help avoid embarrassment)

3. In small groups, students discuss gestures in their native countries. Given strips of paper with directions related to gestures, students guess the meaning of the gesture. An alternate activity is for one student to read her/his direction and the other students, one at a

time, to show the gesture used in her/his native country.

Examples:

* Call the waitress. Call the waiter.
* Tell someone, "I can't hear you." Show someone that you can't hear what she/he is saying.
* Show someone that you understand what she/he is telling you.
* How do you show "She's crazy!"
* How do you say "Come here." What gesture do you use?
* What gesture do you use to tell someone to "Go away."?
* In a big group or meeting, how do you show that you want to ask a question?
* Tell someone, "Good-bye." What gesture do you use?

4. Additional Activity: In one of the classes we continued exploring cultural diversity with a drawing activity. I gave the students a piece of white paper and some colored pencils, and asked them to draw a picture of their home in their native country (or their parents home, their childhood home, etc.), and a picture of their home now. I asked questions about differences and similarities, what they like now, and what they miss. The activity can be used to reinforce past and present verbs, directions ("How do I get to the kitchen?), comparisons, and prepositions ("Where's the door?"). In an interesting discussion among students when comparing results, students noted the differences in building materials between their native countries & the U.S.

TOPIC D: FOODS, ODORS, AND STAINS

ACTIVITIES: 1. Our job site is a manufacturing company that works almost exclusively with different fabrics such as cotton, wool, nylon, etc. This activity experiments with different foods and how they affect fabric. We questioned if fabrics show spots or stains, and hold odors when exposed to foods (I also added cigarettes and hand lotion). I explained to the students that I had brought the following things from my home to put with fabric samples in plastic bags:

Garlic
Onion
Lemon
Curry
Cooking Oil
Cigarettes
Hand Lotion

Each pair of students chose one of the above and a fabric sample, put them in a bag, labeled the contents, wrote the date, and pinned it to the bulletin board for a one week or two week period. After that time we opened the bag to check for odor and stain. Our results were varied, with students expressing a variety of reactions to the enclosed contents.

TOPIC E: A NEW JOB--NEW INFORMATION

ACTIVITIES:

1. Pre-teach: "health" (good body, not sick, strong, etc.), "personal hygiene" (taking care of my body, keep body healthy, clean, etc.), and "good grooming" (good appearance, look good, look neat, smell clean, etc.). Discuss words and meaning, elicit examples from students; write words on the board and ask, "What is good grooming? Write students' answers on a flip chart , if possible, so that words may be added or changed as the topic continues. If there is an answer that I think is important for the students to consider, I ask, "How about...clean hands? Is that important?"

2. Students are given pages 1 and 2 of the 5 page story," A New Job--New Information" (Handout E-1), to read to themselves, ask questions, and list important vocabulary and words that they don't know. After discussing students' questions, I ask students to turn their papers over (so they can't see the words, or if there's a picture or drawing to cover the text) and listen as I read. Again I ask for questions. Students turn papers over to read quietly to themselves. Once again I ask for questions. One student after another reads aloud a couple of sentences until we've read through the story a couple of times, each student reading different sentences each time.

   I ask for "words" (important, unknown, difficult to pronounce, etc.), write them on the board, or flip chart to save, and we discuss and write meaning or

pronunciation. Students copy or write notes under "Important Vocabulary", page 2.

3. Students work in pairs to answer questions about the story on pages 3 and 4. There are enough questions to give each pair different questions to answer: Students A and B answer questions 1, 2, and 3; Students C and D, answer questions 4, 5, and 6, etc. Question 18, again pertaining to the story character, Anna Popova's company, is for whole-class or small group discussion.

4. Using critical-thinking skills, students compare "Anna's company" and their own company's differences and similarities of job operations, clothing, safety issues, equipment, training, and other issues on page 5. The last exercise asks students/employees for ideas for good health and personal hygiene at their company. As a class, the students listed on the board (which could be copied on a poster) the following:

    * Take a bath or shower everyday before work.
    * Change clothes everyday.
    * Perfume. ("Smell good." was the consensus)
    * Wash face.
    * Brush teeth and use mouthwash.
    * Deodorant before work, after shower or bath.
    * Comb hair.

I also used this story, as well as the next topic "Realia", to discuss sanitation issues at the workplace. On page 2, the story makes reference to "not wearing the uniform jacket or smock into the restroom" and the employees' responsibility to keep their work areas clean and safe. We discussed what was acceptable and unacceptable workplace practice of washing hands,

blowing one's nose, spitting, coughing, sneezing, etc. and the use of restroom sink and toilet, lunchroom sink, drinking fountain, and wastebaskets.

HANDOUT E-1

NAME _____

A NEW JOB - NEW INFORMATION

Anna Popova is a new employee at Martin Foods, a company that processes fresh vegetables, fruits, and some meats. Yesterday was her first day of training. She will train for two weeks and then begin working full time on the first shift. In some ways this job is the same as her former job in her native country, but I other ways is very different!

Anna's supervisor, Charlie Sutam, gave her an Employee Handbook. He told Ana to read the company rules, and to ask him questions if she doesn't understand. she must read and understand the rules about safety, production and quality, general work rules, clothing, health and personal hygiene.

For example, in the Martin Foods Employee handbook Anna reads:

- No horseplay inside or outside the building.
- New employees are required to have a physical examination and drug test. This information is confidential.
- Employees may not work if they have a communicable disease.
- Employees must wear hairnets and beardnets.
- All employees must wear boots provided by the Company.

Anna read that the Company policy is for employees to wear clean, white uniforms, not "street clothes." They may not wear the jacket or smock into the restroom.

Every worker at Martin Foods is expected to have good health and personal hygiene. All employees are responsible for keeping the work stations, restrooms, and lunchroom clean and safe.

Anna has a new job, new responsibilities and new information!

HANDOUT E-1, p.2

Important vocabulary:

HANDOUT E-1, p.3

Name _____

A New Job - New Information

1. Where does Anna work?

2. What kind of work does her company do?

3. When did she start training?

4. Will she work part-time or full-time?

5. Which shift will she work?

6. Is her new job the same as her former job?

7. Who is Anna's supervisor?

8. What did he give Anna?

9. What are the Company rules about?

10. Is horseplay OK at work?

HANDOUT E-1, p.4

11. What is required at the Company where Anna works?

12. Can the Company tell Anna's co-workers about her physical examination and drug test?

13. If the employees at Martin Foods have a communicable disease, do they work?

14. What are 4 things that the employees must wear?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What are "street clothes"?

16. Why do the employees wear special clothes?

17. Why can't employees wear their jackets or smocks to the restroom?

18. What are your ideas for good health and personal hygiene at Anna's company?

HANDOUT E-1, p.5

19. How is Anna's company Martin Foods the same or different from your company?

	Martin Foods (Anna)	Your company
work	_____	_____
clothing	_____	_____
safety	_____	_____
equipment	_____	_____
training	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

20. What are your ideas for good health and personal hygiene at <u>your company</u>?

TOPIC F: REALIA

ACTIVITIES:

1. I brought a bag of thirty or so toiletry items, again telling students the items were from my home. As I pulled each item out of the bag (in similar groups), I asked students one or two of the following questions:

   * What's this?
   * What's it for?
   * How do you (or I) use it?
   * Who uses this? Men, women, children?
   * Do you have this at home?

   Usually the students' question was "Where do I buy it?". Sometimes I would write a word on the board for clarification, such as "soap", but I primarily wanted this to be an oral exercise and discussion. I suggested to the students that they bring any toiletries to add to the bag to the next class.

2. For the next class, adding student contributions, I put half of the items in one box and the other half in another box. I gave each student a list of all toiletries from the bag (Handout F.1). After reading, questions, pronunciation, and pantomiming the verbs in parenthesis, the students split into two groups, each group having one box, and matched the items in the box to the words on the list. As each group worked, I answered questions or asked the group to answer. Then groups exchanged boxes to finish the rest of the words on the list.

An additional activity is to have students think of five questions to ask about toiletry items. Then students work in pairs, each student with a few items, asking each other questions about the items.

The students were very interested in this activity and the products I had brought from my bathroom. (I brought the paper toilet seat cover and paper towels from the employee restroom.) I asked them how products are similar or different in their native countries, and if they're available or even used. This activity gave us a format for discussing sanitation, how products and fixtures are used at the workplace, as well as health and personal hygiene.

HANDOUT F-1

REALIA

Personal Hygiene (verbs)

1. toilet paper (wipe)
2. tissue (Kleenex) (blow)
3. toilet seat cover (to protect), (flush)
4. paper towel (dry, wipe)
5. napkins/kitchen
6. sanitary napkins/pad
7. tampon/tampax
8. shampoo (wash)
9. conditioner/cream rinse
10. razor (shave)
11. shave cream
12. soap (wash, rinse)
13. toothbrush (brush teeth)
14. toothpaste
15. mouthwash (gargle, rinse)
    dental floss (floss)
16. foot powder (sprinkle, shake)
17. Bandaid (cover)
18. lotion (put on)
19. deodorant (wear, put on)
20. nail clippers (cut, clip)
21. nail (polish)
22. nail polish remover (take off)
23. nail (file)
24. tweezers (pull)
25. brush (brush)
26. comb (comb)
27. hair band
28. make up (wear, put on)
    blush
    mascara
    lipstick
    eyeshadow
29. cotton balls (wipe, clean)
30. breath mints (suck)

TOPIC G: MEDICINE CHEST

ACTIVITIES:

1. Ask students about a medicine chest. "What is it? What's it for? Do you have one? Where is it? Describe what it looks like. What's in it?" As students answer and describe, draw those ideas on the board, saving the pictures to demonstrate 2. below.

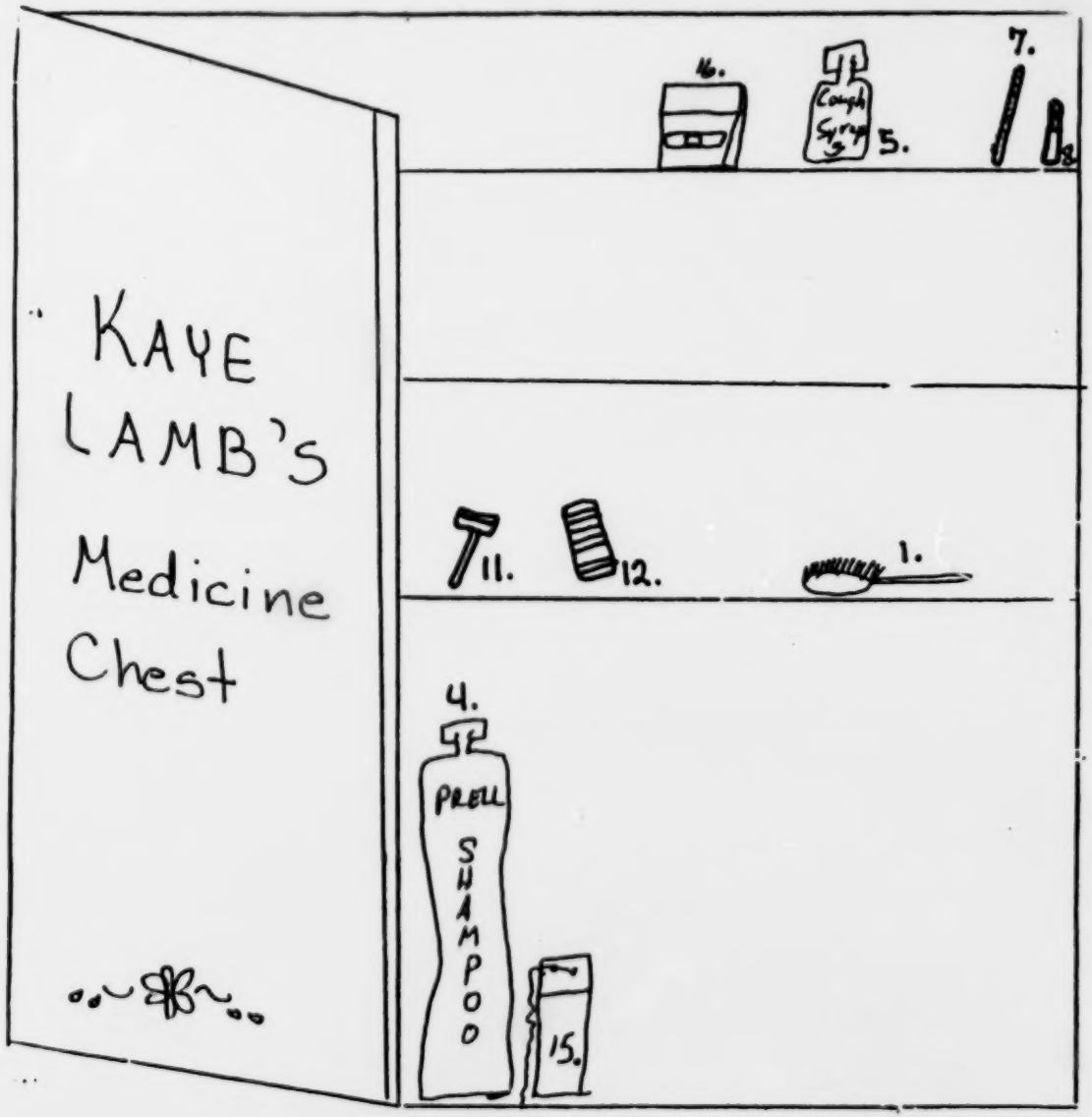
2. Using a drawing of different parts and contents of a medicine chest, review directions, prepositions, adjectives, and ordinal numbers related to the location of items in a medicine chest. For example:

    * put, take
    * to the right, on the left
    * next to, between
    * above, below
    * top shelf, bottom shelf, middle shelf
    * second, third, etc.

3. Give half of the class page A of Kaye Lamb's "Medicine Chest" (Handout G-1 and G-2) and the other half of the class page B. Tell all students that their pages are different but the pictures match the words on the right with check marks. Students study their own page. Ask for questions, practice pronunciation, match items with words for each half of the class, etc. to ensure understanding. Separate students in pairs, one student having page A and the other page B. Students tell each other where their items (with check marks) are; his/her partner draws the item, which is

missing, in the correct position in the medicine chest. Each student will tell his/her partner to draw the items he/she sees (and have check marks by the written word) on that page.

If students want to change roles, A to B and B to A, give students new papers to draw items. Items may be changed to match Realia items (F. above), a combination of new and previously introduced items, new items, or a different form (bathroom closet, glove compartment in a car, supermarket shelves, etc.) according to the exercise.



- ☐ **Missing Items**
  - 1. hairbrush
  - ☐ 2. comb
  - ☐ 3. Tylenol
  - 4. Shampoo
  - 5. Cough Syrup
  - ☐ 6. Throat lozenges
  - 7. Thermometer
  - 8. Chapstick
  - ☐ 9. toothbrush
  - ☐ 10. toothpaste
  - 11. razor
  - 12. razor blades
  - ☐ 13. deodorant
  - ☐ 14. cotton balls
  - 15. dental floss
  - 16. bandages
  - ☐ 17. rubbing alcohol
  - ☐ 18. tape

HANDOUT G-1

A.

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☐ Missing Items

☐ 1. hairbrush
2. comb
3. Tylenol
☐ 4. Shampoo
☐ 5. Cough Syrup
6. Throat lozenges
☐ 7. Thermometer
☐ 8. Chapstick
9. toothbrush
10. toothpaste
☐ 11. razor
☐ 12. razor blades
13. deodorant
14. cotton balls
☐ 15. dental floss
☐ 16. bandages
17. rubbing alcohol
18. tape

B.

TOPIC H: ON-THE-JOB COMMUNICATION

ACTIVITIES: 1. Using a photo of a man getting ready for work (The Working Culture, Book 1. See *Resources.*), a series of sketches of people's daily routine, and a photo of one employee complimenting another employee's appearance (Speaking Up At Work. See *Resources.*) as a basis for reviewing health and personal hygiene and building communication skills, we practiced conversation, new words, and asked and answered questions about their activities:

* What's he doing?
* When does he put on aftershave?
* What is she putting on, a uniform or street clothes?
* Does she like her hair?
* What is she saying to the other employee? etc.
* In your country, is it OK to compliment somebody at work? etc.

2. To practice problem solving, application of knowledge, and evaluation have students separate into small groups and give each group a situational problem with a health and hygiene related concern or practice. For example:

* A worker has a cold. She doesn't feel too sick, but she has to blow her nose a lot. What does she do?

* A worker was absent for one day. He had a cough. When he comes back to work, he still coughs. He has phlegm in his throat and needs to spit. What does he do?
* A worker eats his dinner in the lunchroom. He is not very hungry and wants to save the rest of his food. What does he do? etc.

3. An additional problem-solving activity is to give students situations where they must decide what, or if, action or language is appropriate/acceptable. For example:

    * A worker sits near you. She has strong body odor and smells bad to you. What do you do? What can you do? What can you say?
    * You work with a man who smokes cigarettes and eats strong smelling foods. When he talks to you, his breath does not smell fresh. What do you do? What can you do? What can you say?

    I didn't do this as an activity with my students because of time limitations, but I would like to try it in the future. Instead, I occasionally offered my own experiences or practices, or asked a general question. For example:

    * When I eat garlic for dinner, and I love garlic!, I brush my teeth and use mouthwash the next morning.
    * Where can a worker put a used/"dirty" tissue?
    * In your native country, can you tell a co-worker about a hygiene problem? Someone in your family? Your friend? How about in the United States?

EVALUATION

I evaluated employee/students' understanding and application of material by the their list of health and personal hygiene ideas for their company (Topic E, 4., above), On-the-Job Communication activities (listed above), positive response in class, and observation of application of knowledge. Many things from students' input and feedback will stick in my mind from our work with this curriculum, not the least of which is that some people may practice more thorough hygiene than I realize, and that acceptable standards and cultural diversity go together hand in hand.